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SUBJECT: "THE ANGOLAN" -- ELECTORAL BULLETIN VOL. I

1. (U) SUMMARY

This is the first of a series of updates by Embassy Luanda as Angola prepares for parliamentary elections in September 2008. Key points include:

- The National Electoral Commission (CNE) holds managerial conference
- Election stakeholders call for political tolerance
- Supreme Court advises it intends to uphold the electoral laws

CNE debates location of polling stations

1. (U) The CNE on January 29, 2008 gathered its 18 provincial directors to Luanda for an intense electoral planning session, which included discussion of the number and location of polling stations and booths required for September's legislative elections. CNE officials are considering many options, including utilization of the registration centers used by the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Electoral Process (CIPE) during voter registration.

2. (SBU) Prior to this meeting, many Provincial Electoral Commissions (PNE) developed proposals for polling locations that balance the legal requirement to assign 1000 voters per polling booth with the practical reality of servicing hundreds of small, rural communities without requiring excessively onerous travel or saddling large urban populations with excessively long lines. Bengo's provincial director announced his intention to have 286 polling stations for slightly over 113,000 registered potential voters - an average of 395 voters per polling station in a province the size of Vermont. In contrast, Moxico's PNE intends to use 200 polling stations to service 222,437 potential voters - an average of 1112 voters per station in a province the size Minnesota, and a province that UNITA claimed had too little coverage in 1992.

3. (SBU) COMMENT: The extent of the PNE's actual decision-making authority is unclear, especially given CIPE's tendency to announce that it is also busy determining the number and location of polling stations. Given the many logistical hurdles to be overcome, including demining for safe access and the selection and training of staff, electoral observers, etc, it is one decision the CNE knows it needs to make quickly. END COMMENT

Calls for political tolerance

4. (U) UNITA on January 31, 2008 reiterated its concern over what it characterized as an increasingly tense political climate, and requested that the CNE and the National Assembly take charge of the situation and put a stop to what UNITA considers political intolerance and harassment of citizens. This call insinuates the

government is not doing enough to curb the problem, but Interior Minister Roberto Monteiro responded by telling journalists that acts categorized as political intolerance are nothing more than common vandalism and should be dealt with as such, with the police taking strong measures against perpetrators.

¶5. (U) Nonetheless, on February 4, 2008 Prime Minister Dias dos Santos called for political tolerance and mutual respect to be the "mast flag" of September's legislative elections. He reminded his audience of the utmost need to organize the elections under peaceful, secure and cordial conditions, without redress to verbal or physical violence.

¶6. (SBU) In addition, on February 5 Ramos da Cruz, Huila's Provincial Governor, admitted that there is political intolerance in Huila and pleaded for tolerance in a province that he believes will be strongly contested, asking that all battles be only verbal. Huila is the second largest electoral center after Luanda.

Supreme Court cautions stakeholders

¶7. (U) President of the Supreme Court Cristiano Andre has again cautioned stakeholders in the electoral process to strictly observe the electoral laws, as the Court is the arbiter in all electoral matters, including determining who the participants in the legislative elections will be. In the same light, the Interior Minister promised to enforce the observance of the electoral law with no exceptions, assuring neutrality on the part of State institutions.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: UNITA often complains that government institutions are partial in favor of the MPLA, and insists that this partiality is what grants MPLA the liberty to violate the law. It remains to

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be seen whether the Interior Ministry will live up to its word. END
COMMENT

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